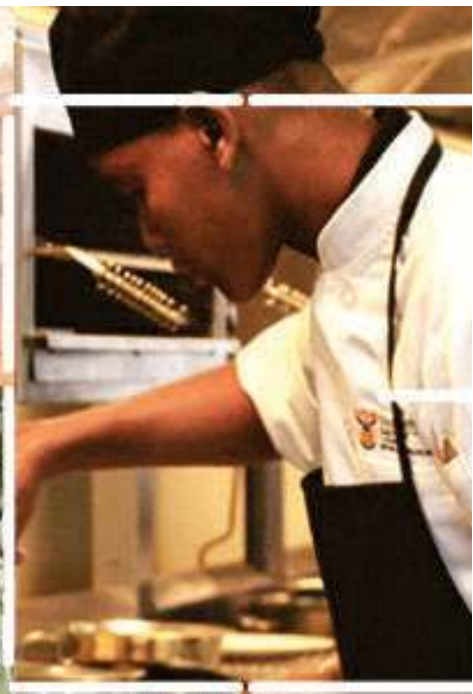


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DEPUTY MINISTER BERNICE SWARTS LEADS EPWP - NYS GRADUATION CEREMONY IN CAPE TOWN

Article by Michael Mokoena, pictures by Sobatini Mahlasela

Exiting EPWP participants must use the knowledge and skills gained from the Programme to identify further study and economic empowerment opportunities within the built environment, says the Deputy Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure, Honourable Bernice Swarts. Speaking recently at the graduating ceremony of EPWP-NYS learners in Athlone in the Western Cape, Deputy Minister Swarts said that there are many opportunities that the graduates can explore within the built environment sector.

“South Africa has placed the property and construction sector at the heart of its Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan (ERRP) and we must not find ourselves struggling to find skilled individuals, artisans, and even Engineers when you can perform these duties. Please use the knowledge and skills gained to identify further study and economic empowerment opportunities within the Built environment. You are not lost to be in the property and construction sector as this will always be a sunrise, not sunset, industry,” Deputy Minister Swarts said.

She urged the learners to remain resilient and committed in their pursuit for a better life. “We also wish to encourage you to organise yourselves and consider forming SMMEs and cooperatives. No one will necessarily come to you. Rise to the occasion, hunt for opportunities, and seize the day! Knock on doors, some will be shut, but many more will open if people realize that you are determined to make strides toward your goals. Don't be easily discouraged. Many young people look up to you, and so remain a shining light of hope”

“Take care of your conduct and manners. In addition to qualifications or skills, many employers today are looking for people who have the right set of values, who show respect, who are trustworthy, dependable, and who are punctual,” Deputy Minister said.

She appealed to the country's private sector to continue to provide opportunities to young people. “We call on the South African private sector, especially the property and construction companies, to demonstrate commitment to reducing youth unemployment. We implore them to be patriots and help grow cooperatives and SMMEs by offering business opportunities to

our youth. We can assure them that our youth are not looking for hand-outs. They want a hand-up!” Deputy Minister Swarts said.

The graduation ceremony was attended by the Deputy Minister in the Presidency for Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation, Honourable Pinky Kekana who also encouraged young people to look at working together to form cooperatives and pursue work within the construction sector.

Deputy Minister Kekana also expressed confidence in the success of the EPWP. “As a Deputy Minister responsible for monitoring and evaluating programmes such as the EPWP, I can state that I am pleased with the contribution of the EPWP in alleviating poverty and creating work opportunities for the poor and unemployed South Africans,” she added.

The two Deputy Ministers used the graduation ceremony to also engage and converse with the community of Athlone on a range of socioeconomic issues they were experiencing. The Deputy Ministers' conversation with the community culminated in a prayer for all young people in the province. Deputy Minister Swarts prayed for peace, unity, love, socioeconomic growth, and the safety of all communities in the province. “We pray for the parents...we pray for our children...we pray for our families...we pray for our communities...and we pray for all the people in the country. We pray for the graduating young people to go out and be ambassadors of hope and ambassadors of light...we pray that they show other young people that you are a living God and you have a plan for them all. We pray for these young graduates to show their peers that there are opportunities in EPWP...we pray that the graduating EPWP youth to bring other young people Programme and move them away from wrong things such as drugs and gangsterism,” Deputy Minister Swarts prayed.

The graduating learners expressed gratitude for the opportunity to participate in the EPWP-NYS programme. The graduation ceremony was also attended by various officials from all spheres of government. DPWI EPWP Branch was led by the Chief Director for Partnership Support, Ms. Pearl Lukwago-Mugerwa, the Director for EPWP NYS, Ms. Lefentse Ratsela, the EPWP Manager in the Western Cape, Mr. Mzimkulu Gusha, Deputy Director for EPWP-NYS, Mr. Lundi Lutya as well as colleagues from DPWI Western Cape Regional Office.

THE EXPANDED PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAMME AIM FOR INCLUSIVE ECONOMY BY CREATING WORK OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Article and pictures by Lesego Moretlwe

In its effort to alleviate poverty and provide work opportunities for the poor and unemployed South Africans, The Expanded Public Works programme (EPWP) strive for an inclusive economy by targeting the vulnerable groups such as women, youth, and people with disabilities. Dr. Ruth Segomotsi Mompati (RSM) District Municipality in the North West Province has consequently created 31 EPWP Social Sector work opportunities for people with disabilities in Kagisano-Molopo and Naledi Local Municipalities.

The participants work in projects such as the Semphete Pottery project in Morokweng village under Kagisano-Molopo Local Municipality. This project has 13 participants who do pottery work and sell the goods for income. In addition to that, 18 participants are placed at the Soup Kitchen and Basadi Basadi Victim Empowerment projects at Naledi Local Municipality in Vryburg where they perform administrative duties and other related duties which contribute to community development.

The manager of Semphete Project, Ms Linda Mothibedi who is also a person with disability has said that she has always been passionate about pottery, and the fact that she can impart knowledge and skills with her fellow community members gives her a sense of purpose and contentment. Ms. Mothibedi has also indicated that the intake of the participants is mostly from the mainstream schools around Morokweng village and provides for people who are 19 years and older. Ms. Mothibedi has further explained that the project has also received support from Disable People South Africa (DPSA) and the Department of Education who have bought and donated an oven, mixing machine, and hand-made machine. All these machinery are important in producing the end products of pottery, such as tea sets and decorative items.

Overall, RSM has created 60 work opportunities across five local municipalities within its jurisdiction. These local municipalities include Greater Taung, Lekwa-Teemane, Naledi, Kagisano Molopo, and Mamusa Local Municipalities. The EPWP Coordinator at RSM, Ms. Nthabiseng Kupi has indicated that it was her pleasure that through a partnership with DSD, the municipality was able to draw a number of people with disabilities into the Programme to perform productive work and at the same time acquire training opportunities.

The Programme Manager in North West, Ms. Xoliswa Letsapa has added that “the initiative by Dr RS Mompati district Municipality has shown that it is possible for employers to create reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities in the workplace by making the workplace more accessible

according to the person's needs. The municipality has not only raised the employment levels of people with disabilities but it has also addressed the narrative that people with disabilities are unemployable. The planned training will give them employment opportunities and the skills gained can be used post the project existence for them to sustain themselves”.

The Department of Social Development which leads the EPWP Social Sector in the province is playing a vital role in the implementation of these projects and has provided the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for the participants to use while working to protect them against health hazards and physical harm.

The disability focused projects in the province are initiated under the Disability Socio-economic Empowerment which aims to recruit people with disabilities who have matric and are willing to participate in the Expanded Public Works Programme in the District.

The participants earn a monthly stipend of R 2400.

The main objectives of the projects are to:

1. Expose and empower people with disabilities economically by placing them on EPWP Work opportunities, thereby addressing unemployment challenges of people with disabilities and exclusion in the economy of the country.
2. Equip People with Disabilities with Information and Communications Technology Training, Business Management, Communication Skills, etc, that will help them to work in office environment and interact.
3. Create a pool where different Departments and Municipalities in the district can source from in order for them to reach 7% + employment target.
4. To change the face and perception of EPWP where participants do not work on the roads only, but are placed in office environment where they can learn office work.

The Institutional Manager at the Department of Social Development in the province Ms. Koketso Mothibi, emphasised the need to equip people with disabilities with knowledge, skills and work opportunities which will contribute to active participation of people with disabilities in the economy. The Department of Social Development as the lead sector of the EPWP Social Sector has adopted a District Development Model which encapsulates the integrated plan to achieve more opportunities and have an exit plan for the participants. The department work with various stakeholders such as Non-Profit Organisations and all government spheres in the implementation of the EPWP Social Sector projects in the province.



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